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EDITORIAL.

A CARD recently sent out by the director of the United States Geological Survey contains this announcement: "The following provision was included in an act of congress, approved March 2, 1895: '*Provided*, That hereafter the report of the mineral resources of the United States shall be issued as a part of the report of the director of the Geological Survey.'"

This change in the form of the mineral resources serves as an excuse for some reflections upon the subject of the sizes of geological publications in general. It is to be presumed that the reasons for changing the form of this particular publication are good and sufficient: this is not questioned; and the specific mention of these books must not be regarded as personal, but simply as illustrations of what we believe to be a general principle, applicable to all, or nearly all, geological literature alike. It may be added that the forms of all the publications of the United States Geological Survey are prescribed by statute, and the determination of their sizes is not an individual function of the director.

Our plea is for smaller books. We look upon bookmaking, not as an end or an art, but simply as a means—as a method of recording and conveying information. From the point of view of the bookmaker and the book fancier this may be all wrong, and the rankest of Philistinism for anything we know, but with their view of the matter we have but little to do. No doubt the sizes of books on geology as upon other subjects have been handed down to us. Parkinson's *Organic Remains*, published in three volumes from 1804 to 1811, and Buckland's *Reliquæ Diluarianæ*, were quartos printed in "English"—the size larger than pica. The *Transactions of the Geological Society of London*, the first volume of which was published in 1811, were big quartos. Murchison's *Silurian System*, published in 1839, was even larger, as was also his *Geology of Russia* published in 1845. These publications set the pace, as it were, for books of pretension.

In those days no one thought of taking a book on geology into the field with him—they were for use in the library or the laboratory. Nowadays many, probably most, working geologists, mining engineers, consulting geologists, students and instructors, not to mention miners and prospectors, carry, or want to carry, books with them in the field. To all such persons the size of the book to be carried is a matter of importance, and especially so on long or difficult trips when baggage must be light. To them these bungling big volumes, these ponderous tomes, are simply out of the question. And we are of the opinion that the carrying of books into the field ought to be encouraged, and that their being printed in octavo will encourage it and will, at the same time, increase their usefulness and widen their influence.

If the big quartos had any more in them to the page than the octavos they would have that advantage at least, but they do not as a rule. Take for example the annual reports or the monographs of the Geological Survey. The latter are printed in pica, so they contain no more to the page than octavo pages would in long primer. The annual reports are printed in the same type (long primer) and the pages are the same size as those of the bulletin (7.4″ x 4.4″ solid) and the only difference between them is that the heavy annual reports are made quartos by being printed on heavy paper with wide margins.

Compare the weights of the annual reports and the bulletins: Bulletin 71 (octavo), with 744 pages, bound in cloth, weighs two pounds, ten ounces; the ninth annual report, a quarto of 731 pages, weighs seven pounds, six ounces. In other words, the bulletin weighs less than half as much as the annual reports, page for page.

The following advantages are claimed for the large volumes:

1. They admit of large page plates of fossils, maps, or other illustrations, which are not possible with octavos.

We reply: There is no denying that a map or plate shows to its best advantage when lying open, flat, and unwrinkled. But the single page plates of the quartos can easily, in many cases, be folded across the middle and tipped in, without in the least diminishing their value to those who use the books. In other cases, of small fossils, for example, plates can just as well be made of smaller size. The gain by decrease in the size of the volume far outweighs any inconvenience arising from the folding of maps or plates.

2. When printed on good paper the leaves open properly, while in the octavos they are too rigid.

We reply that it is no serious matter to find flexible thin paper on which good printing can be done.

3. Books to be taken into the field can be cut apart so that the parts wanted can be carried without inconvenience.

We reply. The suggestion that one cut up his book comes from those who have as many copies as they may need at their disposal. The private individual who has to pay for the books and maps, or who has much difficulty in getting them, rarely feels like tearing out maps or a dozen pages from his volume because it is wanted in the field on a certain trip. He will either take the whole book along or leave it behind.

4. Big books look better than little ones.

We are not disposed to discuss the looks of books. The question with which we are concerned at present is one of service to geologists and to those who look to us for help. Books made for display—"editions de looks," as Lowell might say, more especially when the form interferes with their usefulness—are not for the serious minded geologist. We do not mean to imply that the appearance of geological books should be altogether disregarded, but simply that their utility should not be sacrificed to the vanity of authors, or to the book's solemn *otium cum dignitate.*

But we go further: We maintain that big books are inconvenient in the library, on account of the room they occupy both upon the shelf and when in use upon the table, and on account of their coming to pieces after a little use. Every librarian whose cloth-bound quartos are much handled will bear me out in this.

There is no advantage in very large type: it is just as easy to read the long primer used in the bulletins of the United States Geological Survey as it is to read the pica of the monographs.

There is no advantage whatever to a working geologist or to a student for his books to have large pages, wide margins, or to be printed on unnecessarily thick paper. Such books are cumbersome and unwieldly in the library or laboratory without an abundance of table room, and altogether out of the question for the field.

Small books will serve equally well the man in the office or in the field, in camp or on horseback. The taking of books into the field should be encouraged; our laboratory is there, and there is no other place in which a book can render such lively service.

J. C. B.